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ABSTRACT

In 1992, UNICEF signed an agreement with the government of Egypt to develop and coordinate a community schools project in the deprived villages of rural upper Egypt. Four pilot sites were selected in the governorate of Assiut based on minimum numbers of out-of-school children, lack of a school nearby, and the eagerness of the community to participate in the provision and management of the school. Genuine community involvement was considered critical to project success. Classes were scheduled at times convenient to community and family schedules. Maximum class size was 30 children with 2 facilitators. The facilitators were young women recruited locally and given intensive training in innovative teaching techniques. These included the use of art and music, self-learning, peer teaching, active learning, and enhancement of the official curriculum with subjects and activities relevant to the community and children's interests. In the second year, adult literacy classes were begun with trained, local women coordinators. The community schools became focal points for health services and community development activities. Outside evaluations showed that all children in the pilot schools completed first grade satisfactorily. By 1995, 125 community schools were in operation, with a 70 percent female enrollment rate and many positive outcomes. Remaining challenges are discussed, as well as program expansion and the need to integrate the community schools with a rural school project of the Egyptian government. (Contains photographs.) (SV)

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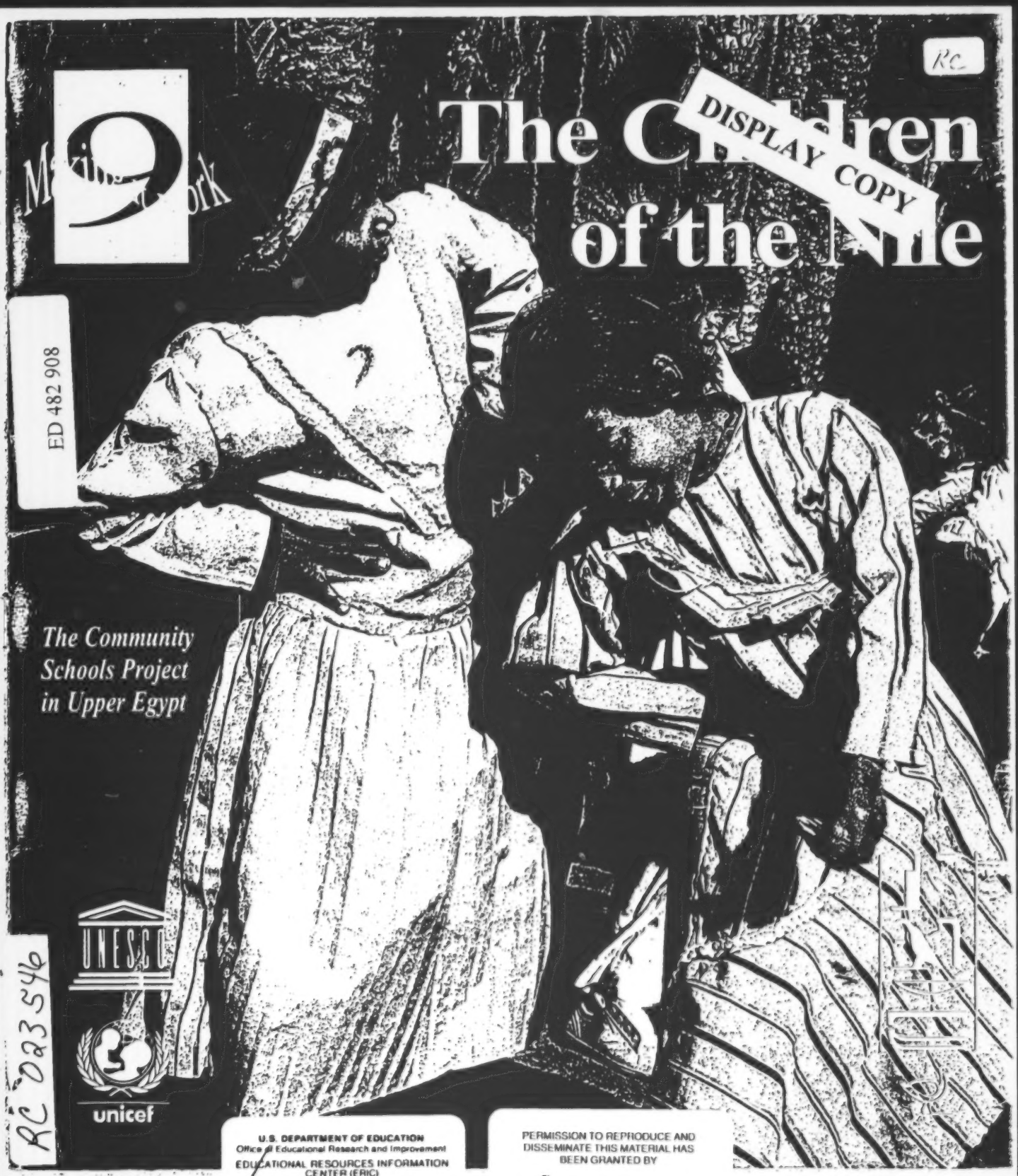

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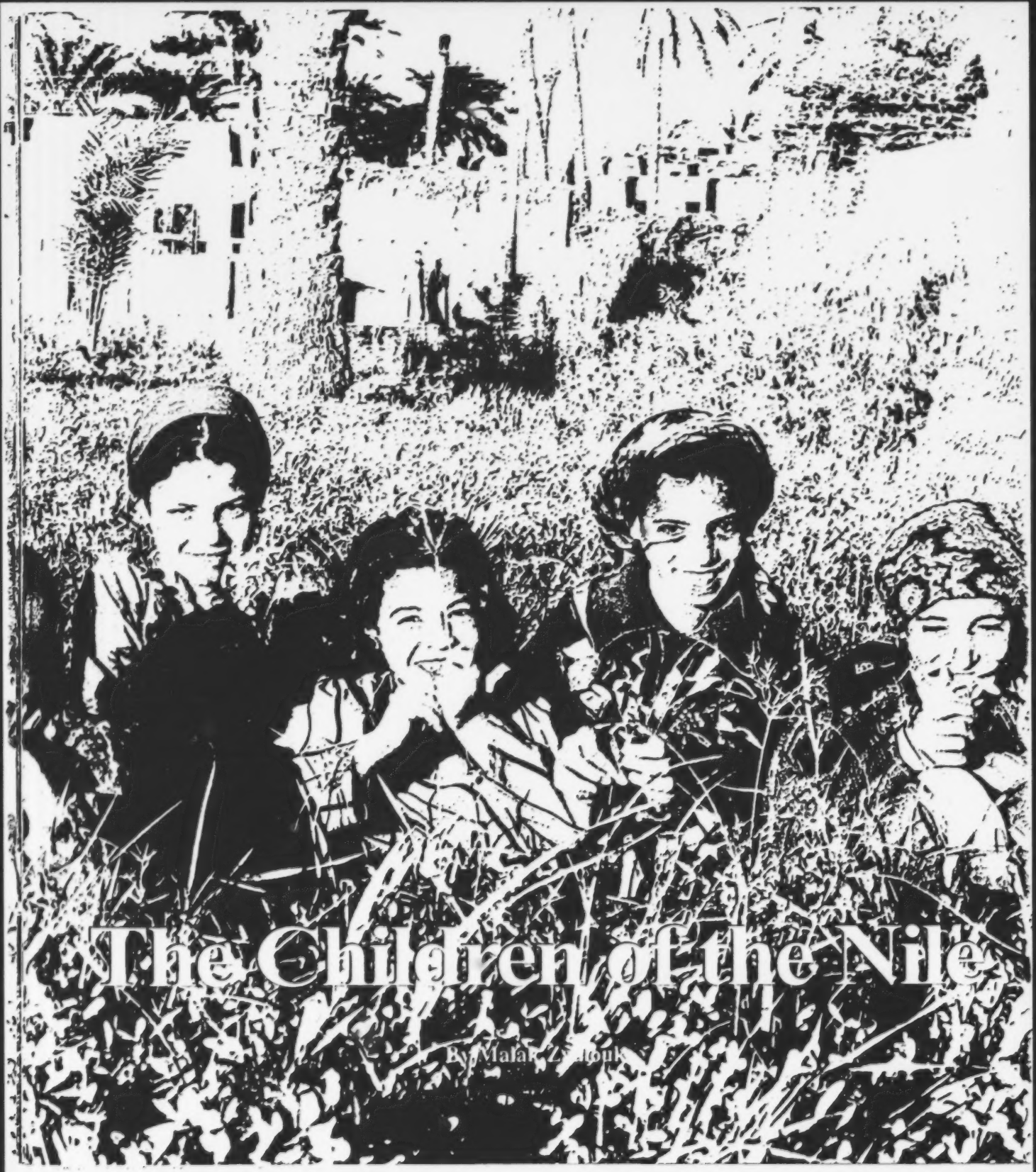

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The World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, recognized that a policy of «more of the same» would not be sufficient to achieve the goal of education for all. Educational systems in most countries clearly need an injection of fresh ideas, a broader vision of how the basic learning needs of all might be met, and the courage to turn this vision into practice.

It was the quest for an expanded and renovated vision of basic education which prompted UNESCO and UNICEF to launch their joint project «EDUCATION FOR ALL: MAKING IT WORK» right after Jomtien. The two Organizations decided to disseminate and promote examples of educational change – both in the realm of formal and non- formal education – through which the principles of Jomtien would come to life: programmes which provide learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults, including underserved groups and those with special needs; programmes which focus on actual learning acquisition, rather than on mere participation or certification requirements; programmes which aim to provide a solid foundation for life-long learning, which are responsive to the learning needs and conditions of the socio-cultural environment, and which build effective partnerships with local communities and parents.

UNESCO and UNICEF believe that effective and sustainable change in education arises from the inventiveness, experience and dedication of educators, parents and community leaders at the grassroots. The «EDUCATION FOR ALL: MAKING IT WORK» project shows that educational innovation and change are already underway in all developing countries and that even the poorest countries are able to take up the challenge of devising educational programmes to fit their means, needs, and aspirations.

The project strategy emphasizes educational innovation in practice rather than discourse. The INNOV database presents many little-known experiences, some of them with considerable potential. The most promising and significant ones are showcased in the present series of booklets, or through films contained in the EDUCATION FOR ALL VIDEOBANK. Others are grouped together and compared in a new series of THEMATIC PORTFOLIOS, devoted to critical issues in basic education.

All these resource materials are used in training workshops, inter-project visits and similar activities meant to support specialists and planners from developing countries in their struggle to turn education for all into reality.

The project team will be pleased to receive new information, comments and suggestions from all those interested in promoting change and innovation in basic education. We particularly appeal to UNICEF and UNESCO colleagues in the field to co-operate actively with the project.

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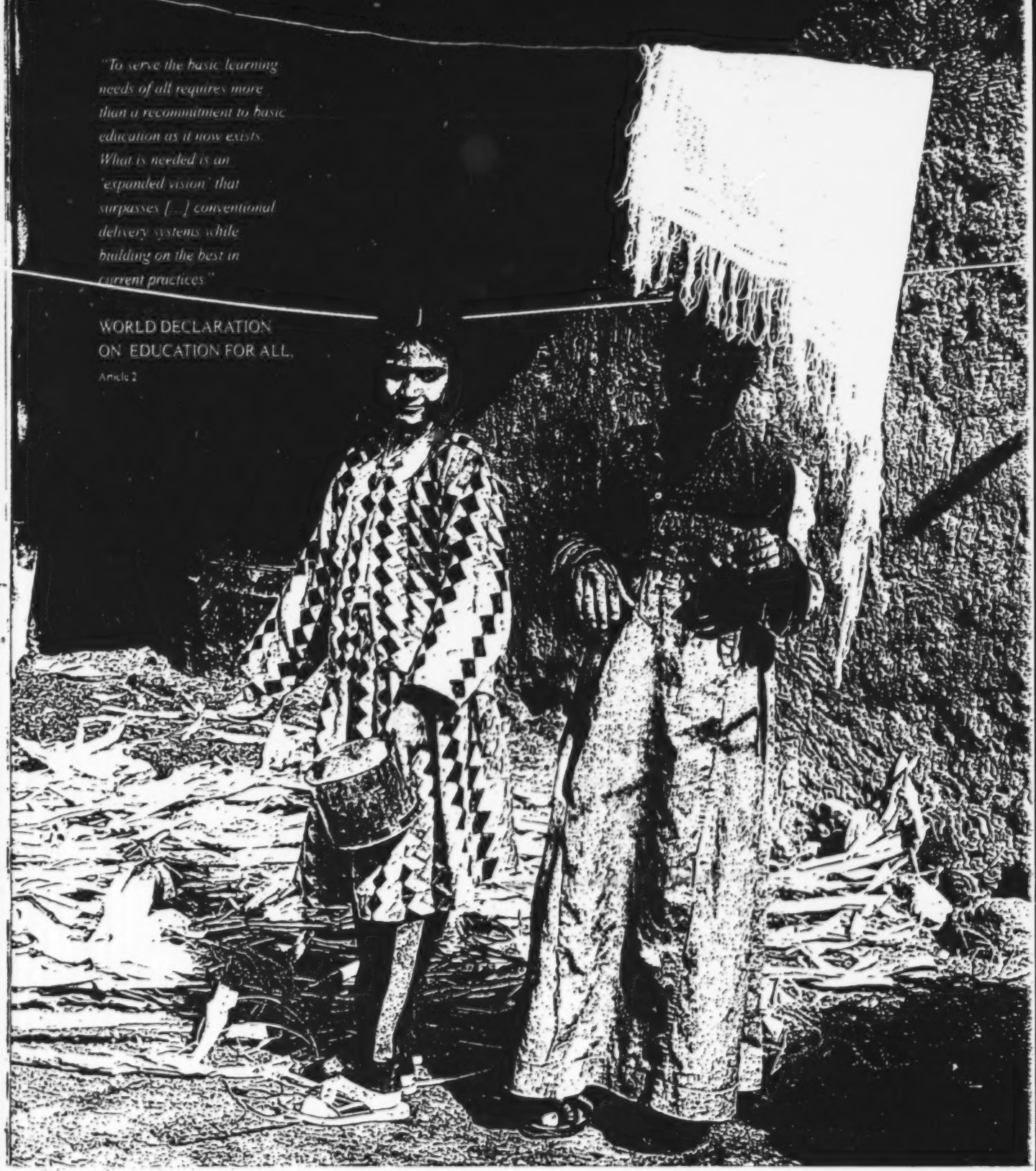

"To serve the basic learning needs of all requires more than a recommitment to basic education as it now exists. What is needed is an 'expanded vision' that surpasses [...] conventional delivery systems while building on the best in current practices."

WORLD DECLARATION ON EDUCATION FOR ALL.

Article 2

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Introduction

Along the Nile, in Upper Egypt, stand the cities of Assiut, Qena and Sohag. From their busy markets, rushing traffic and street salesmen rises a deafening noise. Beyond the city walls, however, lies a different, silent world - the desert. Here the immense, arid landscape is only broken by the occasional dune or cloud of dust. Then suddenly there is a burst of green, a field around a house or hamlet. The Nile through canals and irrigation has brought life to the dryness. Donkeys pass with baskets of produce. Children gather around wells. Each field is a hive of activity with whole families weeding, ploughing and cultivating.

Despite this apparent greeness and fertility, many such hamlets or *"ezbah"* have remained untouched by the changes affecting modern Egypt. Income remains low, conditions harsh and the villages often lack basic amenities. Yet slowly with the arrival of the newly established "community schools" (small schools in the community with teaching by young women from the village or area), this seclusion is ending. The villagers' confidence is coming to light. Material goods and riches are not their priority. As they themselves say "education is more important than electricity in the village. Electricity will only illuminate our roads and houses but education will illuminate our minds." As the community schools spread, bringing change, the villagers see that learning opportunities exist within the hamlet and they need not depend on the outside world. The desire for learning has always been there but there was never a chance to express it. As one elderly man from Helba, a hamlet in Manfalout, in the governorate of Assiut says "we wish all the girls, women and men of the village would get an education, but we cannot afford it nor can we allow our girls to go to far places on their own". Now there is an opportunity and it is by creating that chance that the community schools are now reaching the smallest hamlet and the most deprived.

Education is without doubt a valuable asset for the Egyptian poor. Since the sixties the Government of Egypt has made great strides to universalize basic education through large investments and by making education compulsory and free. However, despite this concerted effort, the goal of "education for all" has not been reached. Squatter settlements in rural areas and on the outskirts of cities have been gradually expanding without educational services. Many groups of the population, particularly rural girls in the *"ezbah"*, are also increasingly marginalized from education. This phenomenon, until recently, had not been accurately recorded but it is now estimated that up to twenty five per cent of the total population may live in many such small rural or peri-urban communities where services including education are often absent. So when UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, came to establishing health and sanitation programmes in Upper Egypt it discovered that some of the settlements they surveyed were unimaginably deprived. The Government, however, had tried to reach these groups in the seventies with small multigrade schools. These had quickly spread and some two thousand were established but the problem was far from resolved. Indeed, as the population increased along with the economic difficulties, these small schools couldn't cope with the great influx of pupils and the changing needs of the job market. Schools came to suffer from teachers' low qualifications, lack of training and minimal learning materials. Soon the rate of absence of both teachers and pupils increased and the number of schools declined until the initiative gradually disappeared. So when the community schools came to the *"ezbah"*, they started from scratch and in villages with no key services.

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The Situation

It is estimated that in the adult population, only sixty two per cent of males and thirty eight per cent of females are literate. According to Nader Fergany in a recent UNICEF "Survey of Access to Primary Education and Acquisition of Basic Literacy Skills in Three Governorates in Egypt", the literacy rate for women can in fact be as low as ten per cent in Mallawi in Elminya province (governorate). Moreover of those who are in school, some 250,000 drop out each year. Estimates by USAID (United States Agency for International Development) have indicated that there could be as many as 800,000 girls out-of-school (6-15 yrs) and Fergany in the UNICEF survey gives the figure of 600,000 (6-10 yrs). It is certain, however, that there are also vast regional disparities with pockets of out-of-school girls in urban areas such as Cairo and Alexandria and in remote rural areas like the *"ezbahs"*.

Egypt is one of nine countries targeted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF for special focus in implementing the world-wide effort to provide "Education for All". It contributes over thirty million people to the world total of illiterates, and each year adds more than a quarter million to that number. The evidence regarding progress in primary enrolment rates is as diverse as the figures for out-of-school children and this is due to a problem of accuracy and availability of data. USAID and UNESCO figures seem to indicate that improvements in enrolment rates have been achieved in recent years. Yet the latest UNICEF data indicate that the expansion of access and participation in primary education has stagnated since the mid-1980s. At the heart of the "access problem" are the large regional and local variations in addition to socio-economic and cultural variations. National statistics for 1992 indicate that enrolment rates for boys in most governorates are in the order of ninety-eight per cent whilst for girls they stand at eighty-five per cent. However, the figure drops in many rural areas, particularly in Upper Egypt. Data from a national household survey indicate that while in rural areas of Lower Egypt, the school attendance ratio for girls is seventy-eight per cent, in Upper Egypt villages it can vary from sixty-five per cent to fifty-seven per cent in remote *"ezbahs"*. Even within rural areas there are vast variations. In many hamlets less than fifteen per cent of girls go to school.

Data have largely focused on access but also on a qualitative level the education sector is faced with problems:

- Only 30 per cent of pupils in primary school attend full day schools.
- About 48 per cent of primary schools have two shifts.
- Classes have, on average, forty-five pupils with some urban schools reaching hundred pupils per class. The teacher/pupil ratio is one to forty-five.
- Drop out and repetition rates are estimated to be 25 to 35 per cent.
- Existing school buildings are insufficient with an estimated shortage of 5,911 classrooms. They are also in bad condition.
- Teachers are not qualified enough. They are poorly trained and their numbers fall short of the required number for primary education by at least 5,000 teachers overall.
- Acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills is low, particularly in arithmetic. More importantly, competency in basic literacy skills is estimated to have been declining since the late 1980s.

- Teachers, in the majority of classrooms, rely on rote and teacher centered methods.

For some time now, the Government of Egypt has been striving to improve education in the country. The budget for education has been gradually increasing and commitment to education is strong at all levels. The education of girls is particularly cherished by the current First Lady of Egypt, Mrs Mubarak. She has insisted on its importance and declared it to be Egypt's top priority. The Minister of Education, at the New Delhi EFA Summit in December 1993, too placed priority on girls' education. The UNICEF Education Section's strategy has also been directly focused on the girl child and its aims and desires were fertile ground for the very concept of community schools which stress girls' access to schools and education.

The Government of Egypt's major education reforms since 1986 have been aimed at improving the quality, availability and efficiency of basic education throughout the country. In 1991, a new organization, the Agency for the Eradication of Illiteracy, was established. This was then enhanced by a five year plan (1992-1997) to achieve universal primary education and, in so doing, improve the quality of learning. Children would no longer be fed information, and education would be a means of developing skills for critical thinking, problem solving and creativity. Again the emergence of the community schools coincided with these principles.

The community schools are now reaching the smallest hamlet and the most deprived.

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Joining Forces

In 1992, UNICEF signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education (MOE). This contract stipulated that the UNICEF Education Section would design, develop and co-ordinate a community school model in deprived hamlets of rural Upper Egypt. The objective was to achieve "Education for All" by concentrating on the areas of greatest resistance, the least serviced and most remote areas - the *"ezbahs"*. The project would, in accordance with Ministry of Education's policies, emphasize the following:

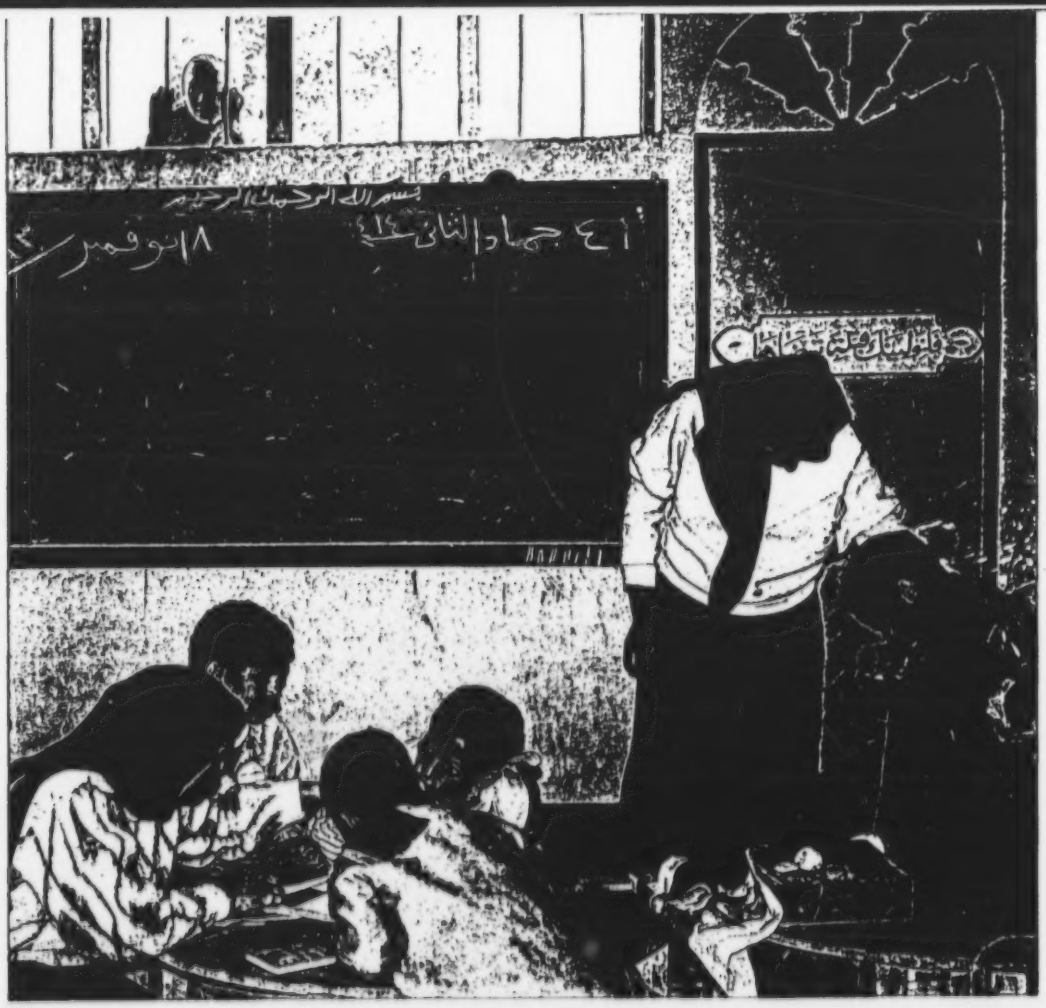
- Ensure that each child has access to school (especially girls).
- Encourage self-help and non-governmental sources for providing and maintaining educational buildings and furniture.
- Select facilitators/teachers from the local and surrounding community to support self-learning, pupil-centered active learning and ensure pupil commitment and attendance.
- Provide new models of strong and supportive management for school facilitators/teachers and strengthen teachers' knowledge, skills, pedagogic practice and class management capacity.
- Emphasize the development of children's critical thinking and problem solving skills as opposed to rote memorization.
- Continually adapt the curriculum to suit children's learning needs, preferences and inclinations.

The model would evolve in three phases. The first phase designated as the "pilot phase" would set up four community schools to develop the system and training strategy. The second "development phase" would test the schools for sustainability and the potential for achieving the spread of "Education for All". During this phase some twenty four schools would be set up. Finally during the "expansion phase" the project would move on to one hundred sites in preparation for national scaling. By then a sustainable system would have developed to allow the initiative to grow gradually.

There were four main criteria for site selection:

- sites should coincide with settlements of populations ranging from 1,500-2,000 inhabitants,
- the site should be at least two kilometres away from the nearest existing school,
- there should be no less than fifty out-of-school children in the village,
- the community should agree and be eager to participate in the provision and management of the school.

The roles and responsibilities envisaged by the partners in the project would then be divided; the Ministry of Education would be responsible for the payment of facilitators' salaries, the provision of books and participation in the training of facilitators. One year after the signature of the agreement the project would become eligible for a school feeding programme (fortified vitamin biscuits) of government regular schools with medical check-ups for the children. The local communities in the hamlets were to be responsible for providing adequate space for the schools, managing them and ensuring children came to classes. In each site selected, an education committee from the local community would be created to bring together



The schools adapt the curriculum to suit children's learning needs, preferences and inclinations.

generations and genders of differing socio-economic status. This committee would act as a school board. It would make all management decisions concerning the school and would be responsible for making the school curriculum relevant to the local environment. Finally the committees would nominate facilitators to be trained. UNICEF's major role was to train the project team and facilitators and implement the project through local non-governmental organizations at governorate level. It would be responsible, also, for the provision of school furniture, equipment and materials. Children would not have to pay fees nor would their families have to be burdened with expenses, such as uniforms, whether in direct or hidden costs. Nonetheless, many families would have to sacrifice time spent in the field to allow children to study, so school hours were to be flexible enough to allow children to continue with both their agricultural and house chores. Graduates from this particular schooling system would acquire a basic school certificate at the end of the cycle just as with government schools. They would become eligible for government exams at the end of the third and fifth grades. Meanwhile because of the schools' multigrade nature, advanced and older children would be able to combine the syllabus of two years in one.

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Sowing the Seeds

So facing enormous and daunting problems but with the strong desire to reform and improve school access in rural areas, the actors of the project began to explore the possibility of advancing into, what seemed to be, strong "pockets of resistance". The aim was to establish a schooling programme that would reach those who had, so far, remained unreached. This initial stage was not easy. It entailed the creation of partnerships between both the deprived communities and local government officials. Without these two critical elements the project was never going to succeed. At the initial phase it was obvious that a kind of "community school" idea was emerging, however whether it would indeed be a "community centre" or "school" was still to be determined. Finally it was decided that it would be a community school with similar aspects to a community centre since activities and services would centre on the school.

During the first weeks partnerships were developed with communities through frequent and extensive travel around Upper Egypt. Villagers were, at first, reticent and although models of community schooling were not alien to the Egyptian countryside, the project group did meet with some hesitation when it came to donating land and space for a school. The younger male community members were also taken aback by the idea of an educated wife. "An educated wife" said a young unemployed university graduate from the Mazani hamlet, "would only give one a headache and ask too many questions". Often the argument was turned around and enveloped in traditional thinking: "No, she would be a better companion, care for you and the children in an enlightened way and she would even cook better!" Paradoxically, some younger villagers appeared to be far more traditional than their elders. In fact, the team had to make use of the elder generation to start making some headway. There were of course moments of despair, as with all far-reaching programmes when rival families with "vendettas" opposed the donation of land. However, the team battled on and in June 1992 they convinced four communities in Manfalout, Assiut, to participate in the project. UNICEF knew from experience and the example of the governmental Colombian "Escuela Nueva" programme what kind of role and partnership with the Government was required at local level. Moreover it was the community school designers' firm belief that partnerships had to be genuine and respected at all levels if responsibility was to be shared.

Weeks were spent with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF officials working out the details of the project. Various hurdles remained. For example it was argued that although "pilot projects" might work, that didn't necessarily mean they were sustainable. Furthermore the idea of using para-professional teachers or facilitators raised many doubts. In fact the very notion of a facilitator seemed so strange that it almost caused derision.

On the 29 April 1992, the memorandum of understanding between UNICEF and the Ministry of Education was signed. Not only did the understanding stipulate that roles and responsibilities should be shared but soon Ministry middle range staff became involved in the actual operationalization of the project. In the month of June a training programme for the first nine facilitators, three managers and supervisors was developed. An excellent trainer, Said Haykal, the Director of the National Basic Education Planning Unit, was assigned to the project by the Ministry. He spent a great deal of time participating in the in-service training, selecting new sites, examining new facilitators, convincing the communities and planning the expansion

phase. The partnership between UNICEF, the Ministry and the communities began taking shape. Support from the Ministry was constantly forthcoming.

To ensure a true level of success the project had formed its first team by carefully selecting a group of well-trained and experienced extension workers who had worked on various UNICEF supported community, health and sanitation projects in Upper Egypt before. They were devoted people who were challenged by the idea of becoming initiators of change. The whole spirit of the project was one of experimentation, exploration and participation. Intensive training was the cornerstone of the initial phase and much mobilization and commitment were needed to spur on the movement.

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The Project in Action

The project began in the governorate of Assiut with four schools with two facilitators each and one reserve or rotating facilitator. [The term facilitator is more appropriate than teacher in the community schools as these young women are in the schools precisely to facilitate learning rather than impose a strict method of teaching.] Of the original facilitators in the classrooms, eight were paid by the Ministry of Education, whilst the ninth facilitator was considered to be a trainee and the responsibility of UNICEF. Through an NGO, the Integrated Care Society in Assiut, the project was provided with one technical supervisor, a field supervisor and a project manager. Each member of this core team was coached to become a leader or trainer when the project spread. The first facilitators were both guides and on-the-job trainers for the new comers as the project expanded. So newly-chosen facilitators observed the classrooms in operation and then paired off with an older and more experienced facilitator.

An Education for All (EFA) conference was later held in Assiut at the same time as the opening of fifteen new schools. The project had by then a total of twenty-five community schools in Assiut and Sohag. Some 150 participants representing international donors, Ministry of Education officials, the Social Fund for Development and governorate high officials were invited. Study tours for Ministry of Education and interested governorate officials were organized. These guided visits lasted a week and gave participants an insight into the project and area. A documentary film on the project and a pamphlet were prepared. The film had been planned from the initial phase and, therefore, the shooting was done gradually and consciously. Meanwhile material for distance training was developed during the numerous pre-service and in-service training sessions.

Subsequently, partnerships and networks expanded. The project moved to other governorates and new NGOs were added: the Sohag Community Development Association for Women and Training, and the Qena "Tahssin Al Seha". Meanwhile Faculties of Education in Assiut, Sohag and Qena contributed to the training programmes of the project. MOE governorate departments also joined in actively in the training sessions but more importantly they became periodically involved in the actual monitoring of the schools with visits and reports. The National Centre for Educational Examination and Evaluations, through an agreement signed with the project, took on some of the formal assessment of the pupils. The Centre for the Development of Small Scale Industries, linked to the Department of Production Engineering at Ain Shams University began an experimental programme with German GTZ *(Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit)* to produce plywood out of compressed palm tree twigs. It consequently signed a contract with the project for cheap wood to produce furniture. The convergence of other services in the community school sites was then envisaged so health posts, water and sanitation services, literacy, early childhood development activities and opportunities for income generation could become part of a general development plan.

During the first training workshop in 1992 three days were spent observing and interacting with children from a local orphanage and facilitators elaborated a kind of "Project Charter" which later served as the basis for a facilitator guide. The first training session termed "Orientation", emphasized the development of a team spirit, knowledge of the project philosophy, pupil activity techniques, child development, the facilitator's role and experience. The second referred to as "Active Learning", was more specific and underlined learning techniques in the various subjects: arithmetic, language, general knowledge and science. The final and third pre-service session termed "Constructive Classrooms", focused on class management and discipline. In 1995 a new training session was added under the title "Group Dynamics" with the aim of enhancing facilitators' communication skills, ability to function in group and pairs, and to develop problem-solving skills.

Much of this effort was directed at the training of trainers. So as faculty of education staff joined the community school training sessions, they were actually being trained in the process. The continuity of the training process was therefore ensured.

Reporting: a system of reporting was developed with clear field, management and technical descriptions detailing the functioning of the project, the status of new sites, the children's performance and facilitators' training. To these are added surveys to give information on the size of a site settlement, proximity to nearest school, number of children in government schools in the area, number of children in community schools or willing to enroll and finally out-of-school children by age and sex. There is also a more complete profile on each child including parents' name, family size and description, health condition, appearance and the child's skills, abilities, interests and expectations upon entry. Both these surveys and child profile are completed before school begins. This helps the project to give priority to expansions within a same site before moving to a new one. This system aspires to achieve UPE (Universal Primary Education) in each site just as a health mopping system would achieve absolute immunization in a single locality.

Innovative Strategies

Delivery: even if community schools operate within the formal education system, the method of delivery, however, is far from formal. Classes are situated in available space easily accessible to the communities. Facilitators are recruited locally, and being para-professionals with minimal or no experience in teaching, they are intensively trained. Access to school is totally free with no hidden costs. Classes are held at convenient times allowing children, and girls in particular, to meet the requirements of family work, hence decreasing opportunity costs. Communities are fully involved and engaged in the planning and management of the school giving them a sense of responsibility and ownership. Children are, for the first time, given the chance to receive quality education and are even able to join regular government primary or preparatory schools once they have attained the learning objectives of the curriculum.

Techniques employed: supported by intensive training, facilitators have managed to apply relevant pedagogical methods in the classroom. They have introduced children to learning through art, songs and games in an attractive way. Children have developed skills for self-learning and peer teaching. Creativity, planning, problem-solving and active learning have become a reality in the classroom. Classes are friendly, lively and animated. Furniture is designed in ways to allow for mobility, flexibility and creativity. Imaginative materials and equipment are used as learning aids. Children are not burdened by homework but work individually or in groups during class hours. The official curriculum is enhanced by subjects and activities best suited to the children's and community's interest such as health, environment, agriculture and local history. Children have their own school backyard where they experiment with agriculture, planting seeds or picking fruit. Oral histories have been reconstructed with the help of the elders in the community and children join the facilitators in writing and decorating a classroom book.

The school's daily schedule is organized around the principles of self-learning, planning and reviewing. The classroom is divided into learning areas (arithmetic, Arabic, general knowledge, science and art). The maximum number of children per class is thirty with two facilitators. The sequence of the day is generally the following: morning greetings with exchange of news, pupil planning time, individual/group activity time, review by the pupils of daily activity and evaluation, break with a snack and time for prayer, group lesson and finally play time. Children then go home leaving their books behind in their cubby holes. Once the children leave, facilitators meet to evaluate the day and develop their class plan for the following day.

Convergence of development activities: the project was designed to act as an entry point for other development activities. During the second year of the project, adult literacy classes began in all the sites through a set of women coordinators. These coordinators were from the sites themselves and were trained by an experienced NGO. By 1994, seventy adult literacy classes were established, with a ratio of two to each community school. At least ten of the communities have prepared space for health posts and await an input from the health sector at UNICEF. In one site an environmental bio-gas plant was set up through community participation. In yet another the members of the school committee built a grocery store and decided that fifteen per cent of the earnings would go towards the improvement and maintenance of their community school. The field team has encouraged these inititatives and wants the local committees of the schools to make

their voices heard. This representation at village level can now reach highest governorate level. Through this new avenue to policy-makers, members of the committees of the community schools have managed to obtain pit latrines, cement or building materials for their schools, water pipes and sometimes even electricity and roads for their communities.

The facilitators have introduced children to learning through art, songs and games. Classes are lively, friendly and animated. Imaginative and local materials are used as learning aids.

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A Community Facilitator

The training of facilitators comes in various stages. First, the community selects their new facilitators from young women in the area who have an intermediate certificate. They are also the women in the village who seem the most apt to deal with children. Their suitability, popularity and openess are all criteria. After an interview, in which the young woman's disposition towards teaching and children is discussed, a selection is again made. Four periods then ensue.

The women are also chosen on the basis of their suitability, popularity, aptitude with children and openess.

Package 1: The young women spend eight to ten days boarding together. For many this is the first time they have left their village or area. They are exposed to the outside world, learn from others and are encouraged to develop a team spirit. Confidence building is the main aim of this stage. The girls are introduced to the concepts of self-evaluation and child psychology. Communication skills are introduced through simple methods such as describing people and villages. Non-verbal communication is also shown to be a possible method of reaching children. The young women sit together, discuss and analyze what they have to give to the children. The emphasis on self-learning is introduced at this stage.

Package 2: The young women board again. This time teaching techniques are introduced. Active learning based on the self is described. The three R's, arithmetic, Arabic and reading are developed into teaching methods. Lively learning, creation of learning aids, and the use of the imagination are discussed in detail. Each section of the training is flexible so the trainers respond to the opportunities for change and development they perceive in the young women. Classroom routines are elaborated as is the wider role of the facilitator. Self-evaluation begins at this stage alongside the concept of multigrade teaching. Facilitators, therefore, debate with trainers on how to respond to individual needs and different levels of ability.

Package 3: This includes two weeks to one month observation in the classroom but with guidelines. The new facilitators have to write a report where they comment on what they see, what they feel they would do, what they would change and how they feel a better service could be given.

Package 4: After these sessions comes the weekly in-service training which takes place at local level. Here facilitators meet with their colleagues from the district and organize work plans for their schools. Every fortnight a meeting with the local community committee is held. If details on child psychology or expert health advice are needed at these meetings, the facilitators are able to contact the relevant authorities through the district supervisors.

In 1993, the National Centre for Educational Examination and Evaluation (NCEEE), in coordination with facilitators and MOE supervisors prepared, administered and marked tests for the pupils in the first four schools. It was the opinion of MOE and NCEEE staff that every child in the community schools had completed grade one satisfactorily. Indeed the report indicated good class averages and high individual scores. The evaluators commended the facilitators' commitment and performance in multigrade classes. With the permission of district officials, the children then attended district formal exams in a government school. The children passed with flying colours and a hundred per cent success rate in all four schools, as compared to seventy-six per cent for government private schools and sixty-seven per cent for government public schools. Even more impressive was the fact that the first of the whole district was a girl from the El Gezira community school. Meanwhile the descriptive report on the children's performance commended their good manners and behaviour.

Evaluations by school facilitators and supervisors are done daily and recorded on a weekly basis in the child's individual file. This assessment requires close observation and a relationship with the child. The student's performance in academic, social and emotional skills as well as the child's cleanliness and appearance are noted. Each week the facilitators focus on one skill they wish the child to develop and through constant attention they see if improvement has been achieved.

The community school model has convinced and caught the attention of high policy-makers. In 1993, the MOE announced the establishment of a "one classroom school" initiative modelled, in part, on the community

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The community school model has convinced and caught the attention of high policy-makers.

schools. The initiative would begin with the establishment of 3,000 schools in rural hamlets. To ensure success, the "one room schools" were linked to the community school project through the creation of an Education Innovations Committee (EIC) bringing together the Ministry, education specialists and key members of the community schools project. This is perhaps the greatest impact of the community schools at governmental and national level and is a true sign of success for all involved.

Several donors have expressed interest in the community school initiative. In 1994 the UNICEF Education Section received a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) fund of one million US dollars, with the possibility of additional funding. Meanwhile the Social Fund for Development (SFD) an institution set up through the World Bank and other donors as a social security net for poverty alleviation sent an intern in 1993 to observe the community schools for four months. As a result a project document called for the setting up of 150 schools along the same lines as the community schools. Twenty-five schools are currently being opened in Assiut governorate.

Significant results have appeared after three years of action:

- Total number of schools in place in 1994/95 = 38
- Total number of schools by end of 1995 = 125
- Female enrolment rate = 70 per cent
- Girls enrolled in government schools near the communities targeted = 12 per cent, girls enrolled in community schools = 35 per cent
- Facilitators unauthorized absence = 0 per cent
- Children's absence rate by 1995 = five per cent
- Only four children have dropped out of the programme since its inception. Of the 920 children in the schools, 736 are girls and 184 boys. There are 66 facilitators and 14 supervisors. Literacy activities in the villages now mobilize 1,580 adult learners and 67 literacy co-ordinators.
- The projections for 1996 are equally encouraging with 1,650 children enrolled (1,320 girls and 330 boys), 207 facilitators and 40 supervisors. With the adult literacy programmes the projections stand at 2,300 learners and 120 trainers.

The sense of shared ownership and participation is triggering creativity and initiative.

Although figures indicate that the project is on track what is much more important from a developmental perspective are the changes in attitudes at all levels. Generally the sense of shared ownership and participation is triggering creativity and initiative. The community schools are acting as catalysts for development and change. The values of participation, democracy, the enhancement of women and girls, self reliance, organization and social justice are just some of the wider values and feelings growing. On a smaller village level, changes are happening daily. The district of Dar El Salam in Sohag governorate, for example, is notorious for the seclusion of girls and women. Girls are sometimes only allowed out of the house if disguised as young boys and women can, at times, only be allowed out of the house on two occasions: upon marriage and upon death! The schools in this district have now not only attracted young girls but have allowed women to be on education committees and become facilitators. Fatma, a young and attractive facilitator has even publically declared that she would only marry a man who would not deprive her of her teaching or interfere with her work at school. A process of empowerment has begun. The facilitators almost all agree that the project has been instrumental in increasing their self-confidence. In one of her many letters, Tahany, a facilitator from Qena, explained that she had liked the project at first because of the management style but her emotions with time modified to a great vocational calling towards the children in her community and education in general. Tahany, Hayam and other facilitators in the project from different governorates now correspond on a regular basis. The girls learning in the school have also undergone a process of change:

Freiga, a 12 year old in Al Kom community school, had been promised in marriage to the son of a relative. She managed to convince her parents to delay the marriage and become engaged to the young man when she finishes her school in two years time. Nagwa from the Abou Risha school, who is a member of the local community school education committee, donated her own and her sisters' bedrooms to set up a school and now spends most of her time visiting families to convince them that schooling is the best solution for their children. The harshest punishment inflicted upon children by their parents, she says, is to deprive them of school.

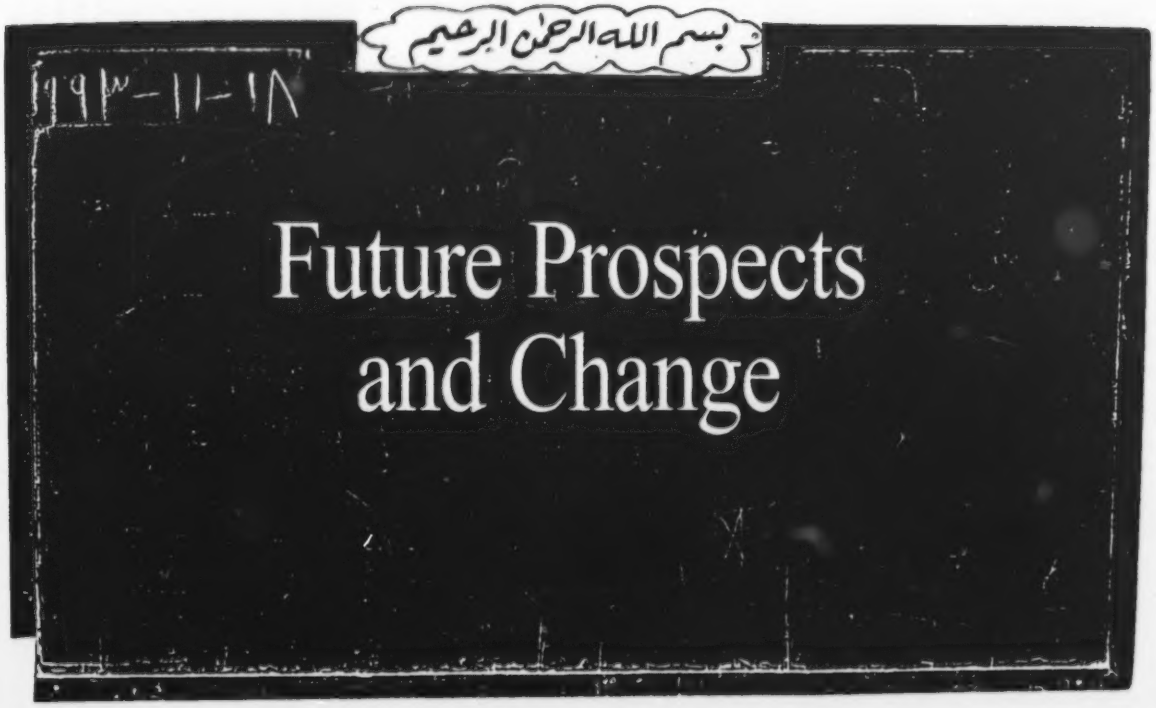
Local district chiefs have rendered the provision of any infrastructural services or other social services conditional upon the inauguration of a new school in their site.

Nassreya, a young woman in the Saad Abou Gayed literacy class, was encouraged to learn to read and write by her young daughter attending a community school. Many parents like Nassreya have learnt to write a few basic words including their name from their daughters and sons. Families are now able to correspond with their relatives who have emigrated to the Gulf States for work.

A web of solidarity is also appearing. In Assar, a village in Sohag, children in one class discovered that a boy had stopped coming to school because his shoes were worn out. The class made a collection and bought their friend new shoes. A boy in Saad Abou Qayed recently cured from bilharzia says he will make sure he and other children never swim in the stream again. In another *"ezbah"* of Nagaa Helwan, facilitators have actually managed to bring members of two feuding families together. Finally, it has been observed in all communities that the children have gained in politeness and assurance.

On a more official level, local district chiefs have rendered the provision of any infrastructural services or other social services conditional upon the inauguration of a new school in their site. At the Ministry of Education, there is a strong feeling amongst high officials that the community schools should expand considerably. University professors who have been involved in the training now wish to conduct research on the schools through Assiut University and a close network of decision-makers and education specialists has been formed.

A steady increase in creativity has also been noticed at all levels. Each and every actor of the project has left her or his imprint and the implementation process was purposely participatory and flexible, leaving plenty of room for adjustment, creativity and initiative. For example, although a prototype for a daily class schedule was developed in 1992, after some testing and analysis, the Assiut field team decided to change it. Again in 1994, after some consultation an even more streamline schedule was implemented and it has proved to have done a much better job in coordinating the aquisition of basic life skills than the formal syllabus. The community schools have been fertile ground for innovations and new ideas are continually encouraged. Facilitators, in one case, came up with a fun and effective incentive system to encourage regular attendance. Each day a child is given a coloured coupon or badge for a full day's attendance. At the end of the month or week, the child with the largest number of coupons is given a prize - absence effectively decreases. Children and facilitators have, too, created committees for the organization of lively activities in the project and villages. Facilitators develop alongside the children, evolving new methods for better teaching and trying to understand the causes behind children's poor performance and problems. The facilitators are slowly becoming vital sources of knowledge in the development and understanding of these remote communities.



Despite the obvious success of the project, it is not without its problems and there is room for improvement. For example, the preparation of school space takes time and the final product is often of poor quality. Schools are built in local materials such as mud bricks, and whilst this is cheap, they are precarious especially since Egypt has recently been suffering from floods and earthquakes. As regards more technical and pedagogical aspects, the project needs to be mainstreamed with greater advocacy and linkages, but more importantly it needs to be affordable for the Ministry of Education. This will require greater capacity building and development of a local supervision system without a rise in costs. Costs are also going to need cutting down, especially in terms of furniture and materials. Furthermore, the community schools invest a great deal on training, development and supervision costs, whilst the "one room" government schools invest more on actual school buildings (40,000 LE per school or US$ 12,000). Joint reallocations between the two projects as they integrate further could resolve many problems through a form of cost sharing.

In terms of training, quality facilitators are not always easy to find in these remote and deprived areas. Although a higher education degree is not required, selection criteria are going to have to remain strict to ensure quality. This means recruitment is slow and lengthy and often cannot meet the demand in school enrolment.

Community schools are, without a shade of doubt, making a significant contribution to "Education for All" in these rural communities but they have not solved the problem of universal participation. In the villages covered by the project there are still children in the six to twelve age group who are not in school (about twenty-three per cent of the total). Looking at it overall, the enrolment ratio in community schools is seventy-seven per cent for girls and twenty-three for boys but because of the low enrolment of girls in government schools (a twenty-seven per cent gross enrolment rate) there are still girls out-of-school in these communities (sometimes up to thirty-six per cent of the school-age girls). The impact of the schools on the communities is certainly positive.

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The opening of the schools has brought governors and other high officials to the *"ezbahs"*, drawing attention to their needs and concerns. This contact between local government and the Ministry of Education is going to need reinforcing. At district level, it has, for example, been suggested that all primary school principals be briefed on the community schools.

The Ministry of Education, as mentioned, has announced its intention of establishing 3,000 schools of its own to serve small rural communities, particularly to reach those girls presently out of school. This has been directly inspired by the success of the community schools and the committee for the implementation of this policy has decided to use the facilitator training approach developed by the community schools programme. This kind of co-operation needs to continue at all levels.

UNICEF, too, needs to take advantage of the educational opportunities it is creating to come in with more concerted health, water and sanitation projects as fast as it can. This requires an information system for the project and a database is currently being developed. The media have reacted positively to the programme and four accounts of the community schools have appeared on national television and newspapers. Finally the community schools should go beyond the primary elementary level and expand wherever possible.

Going to scale and expanding is, therefore, the real challenge of the programme and this is happening with the launching of the government "one room schools". This is a major opportunity for scaling. The two models are not identical and need a strong process of fusion to come closer. In an effort to bring about this mainstreaming and linkage between the community schools and one room schools, the Ministry of Education will use its Education Innovations Committee (EIC) to plan a linkage between the two types of small schools through a process of innovation. Part of the initiative is to tie up small schools around the world and share experiences through international workshops and study tours. Evaluations of this venture have been positive so far and the Ontario Institute on Studies in Education (OISE) has produced a report on the workshops and activities related to the initiative. Members of the Ministry, community schools and "one room schools" have, accordingly, come up with a structure for future action. It consists of the following:

- Creating a department for small schools at the MOE to include both projects.
- Networking the two projects through a newsletter.
- Developing joint planning and training for the two projects.
- Developing joint evaluations and assessment systems for the two projects.
- Organizing ongoing study tours and field seminars.
- Certifying the community school facilitators and allowing them to be formally appointed by MOE as opposed to being contracted.

Linking the two initiatives in numerous ways paves the ground for UNICEF modelling and government scaling of small schools for girls. For the time being, however, the programme will continue to expand as it is. A plan of action for urban areas is also being developed. This time the programme should be designed to cope with those groups excluded from urban society and education, namely working children, street children, drop-out girls at home, children from poor suburbs and neighbourhoods or those with few school services.

As regards costs, development expenses should diminish gradually as the project grows. The initial sums had to be large enough to set up a reliable structure to ensure viability and efficiency. In terms of long term sustainability, the unit cost per community school needs to be shown in light of the cost of that of government schools. For the community schools, the average pupil unit cost in 1994, exclusive of development costs and transport, was in the order of 300 LE per annum or US$ 86. This figure is greater than the average government cost per pupil of 200 LE or US$ 60. However, this difference does not take account of internal school efficiency as the

multigrade system of the community schools means that the opportunity of combining two years in one, in fact, vastly decreases costs. The fact, too, that repetition rates are so far non-existent means that it is very cost-effective even at a higher cost than that of regular schools. Finally the average cost per annum for a single community school, exclusive of development costs and community participation, is in the order of 11,872 LE or approximately US$ 3,500. Attempts are also being made to reduce certain costs for such items as furniture and transport. This is gradually being achieved by seeking less expensive raw materials for the furniture (using, as mentioned earlier, wood manufactured from palm twigs). The transport costs should also naturally be reduced as more and more facilitators and supervisors are selected from the sites or from neighbouring hamlets. The intricate supervising system, now in place, will also be replaced by wider education committees in each site, thereby reducing supervision costs drastically.

Performance in academic, social and emotional skills as well as the child's cleanliness and appearance are noted. Each week the facilitators focus on one skill they wish the child to develop and through constant attention they see if improvement has been achieved.

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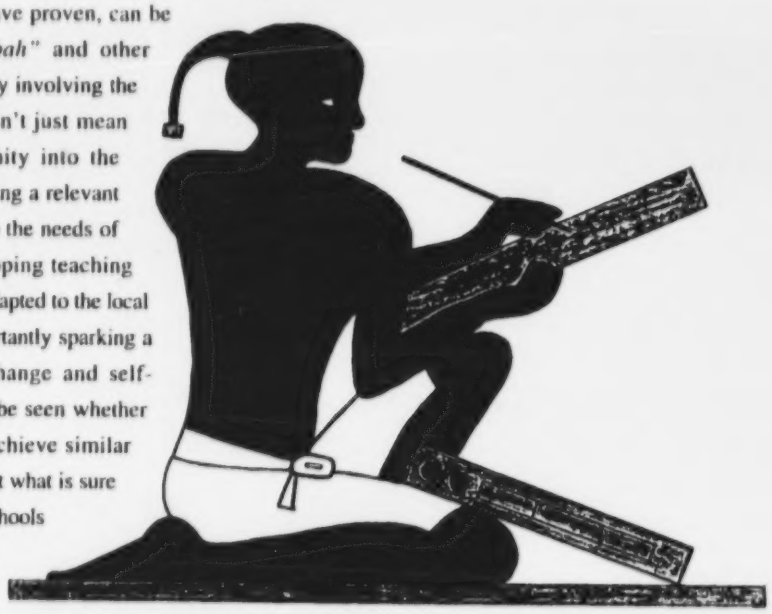
Conclusion

It is important to note that most children in the *"ezbah"*, particularly the girls would never have had the chance to acquire an education had they not been enrolled in the community schools. In the same way, all the young women facilitators not only discover new vocations in teaching but also find employment, which would have otherwise been impossible to find. The long term future of the community schools lies in the creation of a strong and sustainable relationship between UNICEF, donors, the communities and the Government of Egypt. The universalization of education, the community schools have proven, can be achieved in the *"ezbah"* and other remote areas by directly involving the community. This doesn't just mean bringing the community into the schools, it means creating a relevant curriculum, listening to the needs of the population, developing teaching and learning methods adapted to the local context and more importantly sparking a deep movement of change and self-reliance. It remains to be seen whether the same model will achieve similar results in urban areas but what is sure is that the community schools are fertile testing ground and seed beds for true reform and innovation in the quality of education and even, it is hoped, real societal reform.

The true core of the community schools, then, lies in their capacity to bring about change through a true process of democratization, people's participation, critical thinking, survival skills and local initiative. The community schools are a real chance for the children of the *"ezbah"*. They are putting responsibility and freedom of action back in the hands of the deprived. △



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FEATURES

Making it work

Stories on Community School staff in Assiut

Ms Ola Mohamed Roushdy 23 years old a young facilitator in Alésan Hamlet, near Banî Rafea village in Manfalout, started to teach in 1993. She holds a diploma from a school of commerce and graduated in 1990. She joined the community schools project after two years of painful unemployment. She has turned out to be an outstanding facilitator and has won several prizes from her supervisors and an Asaiut NGO, the Integrated Care Society. Ola is clear about what she wants and is very proud of being a facilitator. She invites all to visit her school as she believes visitors could learn a lot. Having participated in community school workshops where she was exposed to international experiences she, too believes the community schools can become an international model and feels she has a major role to play Ola admits that she has actually undergone a personality transformation during her three years with the community schools. At first, nervous and intolerant, she was incapable of working with others and always insisted on having things her way. Through her work experience, she observes how she has changed She is not as susceptible and sensitive to criticism as before she has developed a self-confidence and patience which allow her to function in the classroom, in the community and at home

When asked whether she would ever consider staying at home if a potential husband asked her to do so ,Ola's response is clear *"Never! I could never stay at home again, she says "I have now seen the world and I love what I am doing. You know I have been working for three years non-stop now and I have never missed a single day of work. Even when I am ill I come to school. You have to understand that this is not for the money. I love what I am doing and I love the children. I feel I have become free and I have no intention of taking a step back.*

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Ms Djehan Safwat, the chief technical supervisor in Assiut, Manfalout, began working with the project in 1992. A young married woman, she had some experience of teaching in a private school in Assiut. Having graduated from university in literature, she hesitated several months before resigning from her secure and permanent job and joining a project which was not necessarily ensured of continuity and success. By the end of four months in the project, Djehan had become fully committed to the community schools. Her life changed and became centered around the project. Her husband, a doctor, soon became involved on a voluntary basis and even her mother, a headmistress of a mainstream private school visited the project and expressed an interest in an ongoing exchange.

The quality of her work as a supervisor and her support to the facilitators is excellent. Her creativity is endless. Her interest in education has now become very personal and her two-year-old born during her time with the community school project will benefit from her experience. She says *"I am confident as a mother and what I have learnt on the job is clearly reflected in my relationship with my son."* Djehan was rather reserved before and kept her involvement with people to a minimum. Since her work with the project, Djehan is now more involved in people's lives and has become very expressive of her emotions. She has learnt to relate to people while taking on a leadership training role.

Ms Reda Alam El Din, known as Haga Reda, the chief field supervisor in Assiut, Manfalout, already had a great deal of experience behind her when she joined the project. She had been a member of women's committees, had been politically active and had even worked on some water and sanitation programmes for UNICEF.

Seconded to the project by the Ministry of Education in Manfalout, Haga Reda has been actively involved in site selection and convincing community members to donate land and space. Despite being a mother of eight children and all her experience, she proudly declares that she has grown alongside the project and she has changed in many ways. She believes she has acquired the skill of self-control and whereas, in the past, she easily lost her temper or spoke her mind without too much thought, she has now become sensitive to others and has learnt to be diplomatic. Convincing communities to set up a school is no easy task. She says *"I do not take no for an answer and I never give up. I do not know fear or despair. I just explore new regions and keep going. I have also learnt to deal with many people and have acquired the art of making speeches to advocate and convince people. One has to deal with different types of people and be tolerant"*. She feels her capacities in social interaction have widened tremendously and she says that even as regards her family, the harmony and the relationships have improved thanks to her own job satisfaction.

Mr Mohsen Kamel, the local project manager and co-ordinator, one of the rare men working in the project, joined the community schools at the start of the pilot phase in Manfalout. Mohsen very much grew with the project although he already had fifteen years of development experience in Upper Egypt. At first, Mohsen admits, he wasn't sure about the success of the project and did not grasp its full significance. Over the years his original managing skills developed and grew. Initially he was solely responsible for the running of the Assiut project, but as his management ideas matured, a model developed that was ripe for application in Sohag and Qena. Subsequently, in a way, the individual became a kind of institution equipped to transfer experience and knowledge. Mohsen now has a private firm for technical assitance on pedagogical and management issues and as he says his ideas have changed: *"At first the project was a job. It was a breadwinner. Today it is a life project. I am in it because it is very meaningful to me and it allows me to fulfill many professional and personal needs and really become involved in humanitarian work. I am no longer concerned with just getting a job done or even making a living. I have become attached to people's desires and motivations and I want to see the programme continue and succeed. For me it is a sacred message. I feel for these young children, for the communities and also for those wonderful facilitators."*

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FEATURES
Making it Work

The Social Contract

In each community school, the facilitators and children draw up a social contract which becomes a set of rules for observation by both the facilitators and children. This manifesto, for example, is from the community school of Khalifa in Refaa village.

- Treat each other with care and gentleness
- Sit quietly and observe
- Help facilitators in their job
- Move around the classroom and help others
- Solve problems by coming to an agreement
- Only use what you need, never waste
- Keep the classroom tidy
- Preserve the organization of the classroom
- Express rejection in words, not in action

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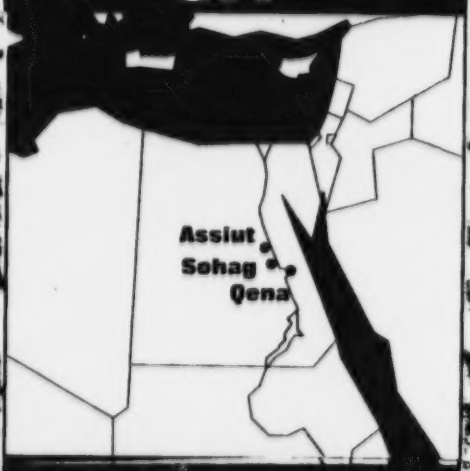
Egypt



Population: **60.3 m**
(1993 estimate)

Life Expectancy: **64 years**
(1993 estimate)

Female Illiteracy Rate: **61.2 %**
Male Illiteracy Rate: **36.4 %**

Length of Compulsory Education:
8 years

Net Enrolment Ratio, female: **82 %**
Net Enrolment Ratio, male: **95 %**

Source: World Education Report
UNESCO, Paris 1995

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Facilitators

Nager El Dohea Bahari Community School, Qena
Nagaa Khalifa Community School, Sohag

The community schools throughout Upper Egypt all have a special feel to them stamped as they are with the personality of the facilitators and children.

A corner system means that the classroom is organized into precise areas of activity Art, Language and Religion, General Activities or Maths. Along one side of the classroom, the children have their cubby holes with their names which they, themselves, have written. They are, more often than not, the first words they write.

The children catch the teachers' attention by raising their hands and when they talk to other children they maintain this form of politeness and respect. Charts describing local geography, the seeds used in the fields, local history, poems and prayers adorn the walls. Games such as musical chairs, acting or dance weld the class together and the facilitators stress again and again the importance of sharing and looking after each other. When asked what the schools have given them, the facilitators all agree that the project has radically changed their lives. They are more apt to deal with their own children if they have them and the relationship with children has become a major focus in their lives. They now see the community as a cohesive whole which needs to be helped along the path of self-reliance and achievement. Their greatest hope is that the schools will continue growing in number and they are prepared to vouch for the changes it has brought about. Facilitators in Qena and Sohag all say that their pupils have become quieter and more co-operative. They now clean the school, show an interest in each others' work and are respectful in their attitudes. It is now not rare for a child to spontaneously help another and, it is hoped, this chain of knowledge is rapidly expanding beyond the school into the home.

Facilitators speak of two major problems: children's occasional absence to help parents in the fields and the obstacle of slow learners in the classroom. By talking to parents and adapting the school schedule, the first of these is being resolved. As regards slow learning the facilitators are continually coming up with new innovations and their training sessions are an ideal opportunity to swop notes with others on the problem. At one school in Sohag, facilitators are developing special pictures and teaching aids to help slow children, taking care, though never to make them feel left out or behind. Other facilitators use techniques learnt in training, like finger puppets or acting. At the end of the lesson, the facilitators ask the children to assess their performance, from this they learn where to direct their teaching. Pupils also assess each other and this can lead to some very revealing situations for the facilitators when they see the desires and motivations in each child.

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Education for All, Making it Work is a major international UNESCO/UNICEF programme to collect, analyze and promote successful basic education projects in the developing world.

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Making it work

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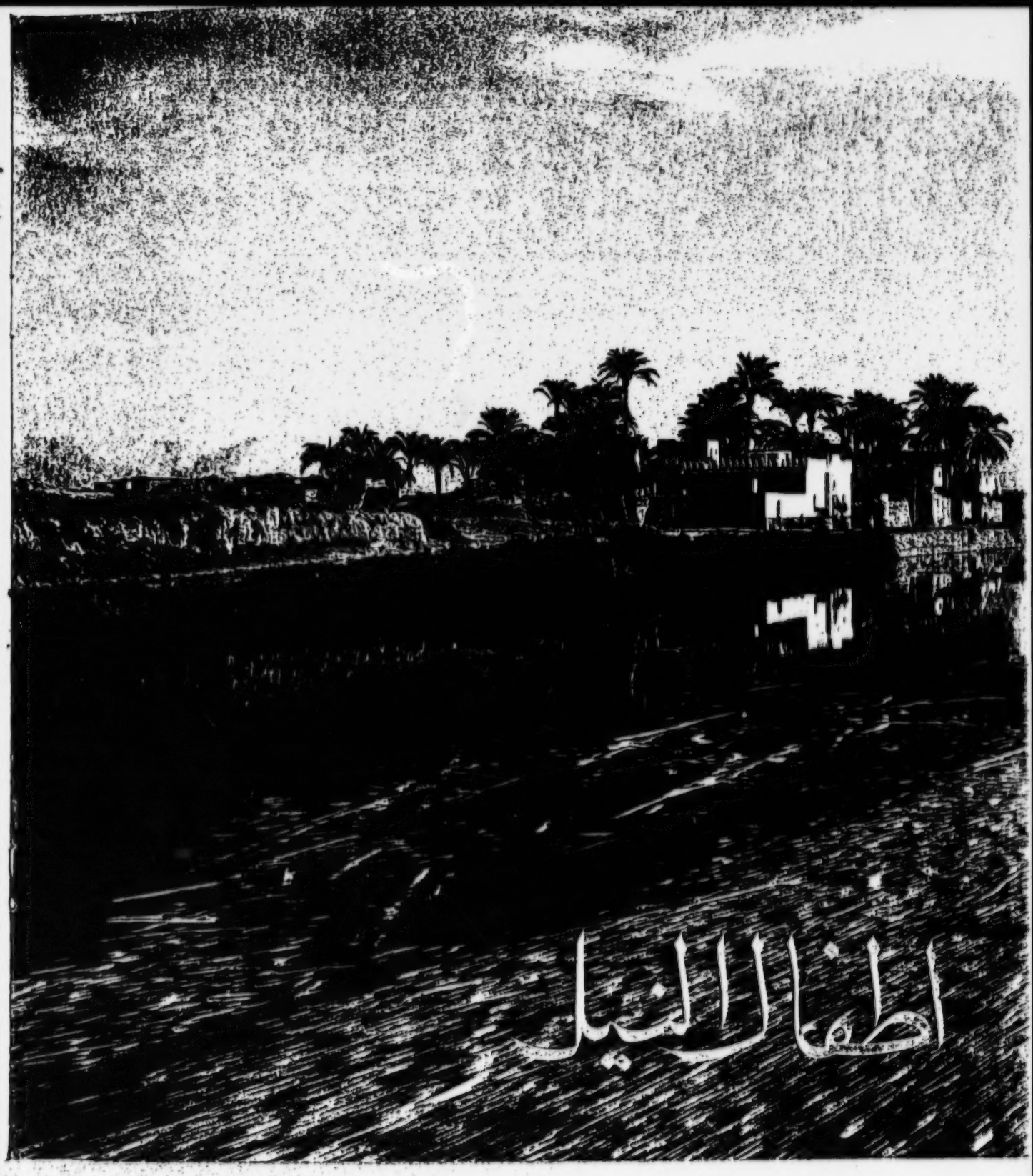

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Making it work

Many remote and small villages (*ezbah*) in Upper Egypt remain deprived of education and other key services. In 1992, UNICEF, the Government of Egypt and local NGOs began a unique movement to bring education, in the form of community schools, to the children of the region.

Eighty per cent of the pupils are girls, those who have suffered the most from the lack of education opportunities. The teachers or facilitators are all young women selected from the area. Each community school is a haven of creativity and dialogue with a daily schedule organized according to the needs and desires of the children. Classrooms are divided into activity corners (art, maths, science, religion and general knowledge) and the children are continually encouraged to help each other, express their motivations and even assess one another and their facilitators.

The schools have had a real impact at community, national and governmental level. The Government is currently setting up its own version of the community schools and the project is spreading fast. Other development programmes for sanitation, electricity and literacy are using the network created by the schools. Some 2,300 adults are now taking part in a literacy campaign.

The community schools are a true chance for the children of the "*ezbah*": they are putting responsibility and freedom of choice back into the hands of the deprived.

The Editors

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